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IMPERIAL PORPHYRY SARCOPHAGI IN CONSTANTINOPLE

A. A. Vasiliev

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DESCRIPTIONS of marble sarcophagi as well as sarcophagi themselves have come down to us in both Byzantine literary sources and archaeological evidence of mediaeval Constantinople. Our information deals generally with the sarcophagi of the emperors, empresses, members of the imperial family, some patriarchs, and some very prominent laymen. These sarcophagi were made of various sorts of marble which during the Byzantine period were found in the vast territory of the Empire. I intend to discuss here only one class of sarcophagi, namely those of porphyry.

Porphyry, one of the most precious sorts of marble during the early period of Byzantine history, was a special product of Egypt, and there it was obtained only in one place, in the Eastern Desert, between the Nile and the Red Sea, on the trade route from the Red Sea port of Myos Hormos (*Mouse Harbor*, now Abu Shaar) in the northern section of the coast line to Kainopolis (now Kenah) in the Nile Valley near the horseshoe bend of the river about forty miles north of Thebes. It may be pertinent to mention that the four principal roads, wherever they started, all reached the Nile near this horseshoe. Like other Roman roads, the road from Kainopolis to Myos Harbor was provided with fortified watering stations. In using here the word "road" I do so with reservations, because the roads of the Eastern Desert, like all desert roads, were not, properly speaking, roads at all but only tracks. At the end of this road a little north of the twenty-sixth degree of the north latitude, we reach the town at the quarries, Mons Porphyrites (ὄρος πορφύριτες) or Mons Porphyreticus. In one source we read: "capitella columnarum ex monte porfyritico incidi" and "Mons porphyreticus, qui dicitur igneus" (Greek version: τὸ ὄρος τὸ πορφύρεον ὃ κέκληται πυρραῖον),[1] which is to be explained by the red color of porphyry. The modern name of the mountain, Djebel Dukhan, i.e. the Smoking Mountain, almost certainly goes back to the "Fire Mountain" (Mons Igneus) of our Latin evidence. The place was visited by several travelers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It consists now of a temple, dedicated to Zeus-Serapis-Helios by the Emperor Hadrian, the remains of a well with pillars round it, and a square-walled town on an elevated rock. One of the travelers (Villiers-Stuart) writes in 1910:

About 1000 metres south-west of the temple is the foot of the Roman causeway which winds up the flank of Djebel-Dukhan to a porphyry quarry. The horizontal length of

[1] *Passio sanctorum quattuor coronatorum auctore Porphyrio*, ed. H. Delehaye, *Acta Sanctorum* Novembris III (1910), dies 5–8, p. 767. c. 3–4 (dies octavus novembris). Latin text

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the road is about 1400 metres and in this distance it rises about 600 metres. The causeway is built of dry rubble with frequent buttresses, and the ingenuity necessary to erect such a structure on a steep mountain side, without cement or mortar, renders it the most remarkable of the Roman remains in the Eastern Desert.[2]

It is interesting that at the beginning of the twentieth century a Greek inscription was discovered at Djebel Dukhan; and the presence of this record is of special interest, as the inscription opens with the words καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία, the unique memento of Christian influence at Dukhan.[3]

In his *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, Rostovtzeff writes, "In Egypt many rich quarries of the best and rarest stone were probably first opened by the Romans."[4] If I am not mistaken, Rostovtzeff's statement must be understood as an indication that a really intensive exploitation of the quarries of the best and rarest stone, including of course porphyry, started in the Roman period; we know that, though during the preptolemaic or pharaonic time red granite had been erroneously taken for porphyry, in the ptolemaic period, when purple became the kingly color, porphyry was in demand at the ptolemaic court, and some specimens of porphyry works of that period have survived.[5] But the heyday of porphyry production came during the imperial Roman and early Byzantine period; and even during this time porphyry became popular at the imperial court not at once but gradually. In the first century A.D. Plinius in his *Natural History* tells the following story referring to the time of the Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41–54):

Porphyrites, which is another production of Egypt, is of a red color; the kind that is mottled with white blotches is known as "leptospsephos" (refined stone). The quarries there are able to furnish blocks of any dimensions, however large. Vitrasius Pollio, who was steward (procurator) in Egypt for the Emperor Claudius, brought to Rome from Egypt some statues made of this stone, a novelty which was not very highly approved of, as no one has since followed his example.[6]

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and a Greek version. A very detailed and substantial *Commentarius praevius* by Delehaye, pp. 748–765. See R. Delbrück, *Antike Porphyrwerke* (Berlin–Leipzig, 1932), p. XIX.

[2] See G. W. Murray, *The Roman Roads and Stations in the Eastern Desert of Egypt*, *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, XI (1925), 148. Sometimes the Mons Porphyreticus has been confused with the Mons Claudianus, located south of it, famous for its granite quarries. See K. Fitzler, *Steinbrüche und Bergwerke im ptolemäischen und römischen Aegypten*, *Leipziger historische Abhandlungen*, Heft 21 (Leipzig, 1910), 5; 96–97. M. Khvostov, *History of Oriental Commerce in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Kazan, 1907), p. 370 (in Russian). Khvostov erroneously identifies Djebel Dukhan with Mons Claudianus.

[3] See Delbrück, *op. cit.*, pp. xxiii–xxiv. Delbrück reproduces this inscription, which is unfortunately not very clear, with its three crosses; two of them are *cruces ansatae*.

[4] Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, II (Oxford, 1941), 1177; cf. his note 127, III, 1615.

[5] See Delbrück, *op. cit.*, pp. 13–15; 34–38.

[6] *C. Plinii Secundi Naturalis Historia*, liber XXXVI, 7 (11), 57.

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But this story, as I have said, belongs to the first century A.D. Later the stone became very popular.

In 1910 H. Delehaye in one of the latest volumes of the *Acta Sanctorum* published a legendary text of *Passion of the four crowned saints* by a certain Porphyrius, which contains a story, very interesting in my opinion, referring to the time of Diocletian and showing his interest in art and especially in porphyry. The story tells how "the admirer of art" (*dilectatus in artem*), Diocletian, called the most skillful carvers (their names are given in the text) and ordered them to have columns carved with capitals (*ex metallo porfiritico*). He said, moreover, "I wish you with your experience in art to carve capitals of columns from the Porphyreticus Mountain (*ex monte porphyritico*)." Following his order, the artificers and philosophers in great numbers left for the Porphyreticus Mountain, which is called the Fire Mountain (*qui dicitur igneus*; see above). Later, in addition to columns and capitals Diocletian ordered them to have made various other pieces of art from the same material. The artists were very successful in all their work, with one exception; we do not know why, but they were unable to make a statue of Asclepius. No doubt this legendary text reflects Diocletian's well-known passion for erecting buildings, emphasized by our sources which call him φιλοκτίστης and attribute to him *infinitam quandam cupiditatem aedificandi.* He culminated his building activities in his own palace at Spalato, which, in the history of art, "serves as preface to the chapter of Byzantine architecture." [7]

In the building activities of Byzantium in later times porphyry took a very important part. Porphyry was used among other marbles for the erection of St. Sophia under Justinian, and the poet of the sixth century, Paul the Silentiary, in his poem on St. Sophia writes: "There is a wealth of porphyry too, powdered with bright stars, that has once laden the river boat on the broad Nile." [8] In the imperial palace there was a special purple chamber, ἡ Πορφύρα, described at length by Anna Comnena. She writes:

[7] *Passio sanctorum quattuor coronatorum auctore Porphyrio*, ed. H. Delehaye, *Acta Sanctorum*, Novembris III (1910), dies 5–8, c. 3–4, 5, 7–8, 10, 12–13 (pp. 767–768; 770–773). The text of appropriate passages has been reproduced by Delbrück, *op. cit.*, pp. xviii–xix. Since in the text itself the name of Egypt where the Mons Porphyreticus is located is not given, most scholars have thought that the story told in the *Passio* took place in the region of Sirmium in the Balkans. See for instance J. Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'Empire Romain* (Paris, 1918), pp. 88–90. But there is no doubt whatever that the text of the *Passio* deals with the Mons Porphyreticus in Egypt. See Delbrück, *op. cit.*, p. 2. For the last words of my text see O. Dalton, *East Christian Art* (Oxford, 1925), p. 116. On Diocletian's building activities, Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum*, VII, 8; Malalas, p. 306.

[8] *Pauli Silentiarii Descriptio S. Sophiae*, vers. 625–627; Bonn ed., p. 31; P. Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentiarius: Kunstbeschreibungen justinianischer Zeit* (Leipzig

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This purple room was a certain building in the palace shaped as a complete square from its base to the spring of the roof, which ended in a pyramid; it looked out upon the sea and the harbour where the stone oxen and lions stand. The floor of this room was paved with marbles and the walls were panelled with it but not with ordinary sorts nor even with the more expensive sorts which are fairly easy to procure, but with the marble which the earlier Emperors had carried away from Rome. And this marble is, roughly speaking, purple all over except for spots like white sand sprinkled over it. It is from this marble, I imagine, that our ancestors called the room "purple." [9]

According to a rather dubious statement of the Latin writer of the tenth century, Liudprand of Cremona, who twice visited Constantinople, the construction of this purple chamber is to be attributed to the epoch of Constantine the Great.[10]

Byzantine writers call porphyry either the Roman or the Egyptian marble. The latter name is of course obvious. But the name of Roman marble requires explanation. We have already seen that Anna Comnena wrote that the earlier emperors had carried porphyry away from Rome. It is known that the Roman emperors before Constantine had erected in Rome a number of porphyry monuments of various sorts. When Constantine began to build Constantinople, the best pagan monuments from all parts of the empire were used in beautifying the new capital. Among other cities Rome supplied the city of Constantine not only with porphyry works already made but also with blocks of porphyry which had been brought to Rome and had not yet been worked on. This fact may explain the name of Roman marble as applied to the porphyry which reached the new capital not directly from Egypt but through Rome.[11]

The porphyry quarries in Egypt were entirely neglected after the Arab conquest in the seventh century and were rediscovered at the beginning of the nineteenth century by two Englishmen, Burton and Wilkinson.

The early Byzantine emperors of the fourth and fifth centuries were buried in porphyry sarcophagi. The burial place of the Byzantine emperors down to the beginning of the eleventh century was the Church of the Holy Apostles, hardly inferior to St. Sophia in luxury and beauty, which was destroyed by the Turks soon after the capture of Constantinople to make room

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und Berlin, 1912), p. 245. In English, in W. R. Lethaby and H. Swainson, *The Church of Sancta Sophia Constantinople* (London–New York, 1894), p. 45. I shall return to this passage later.

[9] Anna Comnena, *Alexias*, VII, 2; ed. Reifferscheid, I, pp. 229–230; ed. B. Leib, II (Paris, 1943), p. 90. In English, *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, transl. by Elizabeth A. S. Dawes (London, 1928), p. 170.

[10] *Liudprandi Antapodosis*, I, 7. In English, *The Works of Liudprand of Cremona*, transl. by F. A. Wright (London, 1930), pp. 35–36.

[11] See the commentary of Ducange to Paul the Silentiary, Bonn ed., p. 68. Reiske, *Commentarii ad Constantini Porphyrogeniti De Cerimoniis*, Bonn ed., pp. 756–757.

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for the mosque of Muhammed II, the conqueror of the city. The last emperor who was buried in that church was the brother of the famous Emperor Basil II Bulgaroctonus, Constantine VIII, who died in 1028. Towards the end of the empire the Church of the Holy Apostles was in a state of decay. At the beginning of the fifteenth century an Italian, Christophorus Buondelmonti, visited Constantinople and in his description of the city remarked that the Church of the Holy Apostles was in a state of dilapidation (*ecclesia jam derupta*).[12]

After 1028 there was no specific church as the burial place for the emperors, who were buried henceforth in various monasteries and churches. Some writers state that as a successor to the Church of the Holy Apostles the Church of S. Saviour Pantokrator (now Zeïrek Kilissi Jamissi), which was founded by the Comneni in the first half of the twelfth century, became the burial place of the deceased emperors. But this opinion is not correct because in this church four emperors only were laid to rest (it is true, more than in any other one monastery), two Comneni (John II and Manuel I) and later in the fifteenth century two Palaeologi (Manuel II and John VIII). Other monasteries received usually one emperor, occasionally two.

Several literary sources for imperial sarcophagi have survived. The first and most important evidence is found in the very well-known work *On the Ceremonies of the Byzantine Court*, which was compiled under Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in the tenth century.[13] There we have a brief and dry but extremely valuable list of the imperial tombs, beginning with that of Constantine the Great. The compilation usually designates of what material the sarcophagi were made. Sometimes the sarcophagi of the imperial wives, sisters, and brothers are also mentioned. The text which has come down to us contains two additional pieces of information which were inserted several years after the death of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in all probability under Nicephorus Phocas (963–969): the first addition mentions the tomb with the body of Constantine Porphyrogenitus himself; the other inserted text deals with him as with an emperor already dead.[14]

The second source for imperial sarcophagi is the list which has been preserved in *The Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles* by Nicholas Mesarites, a writer who lived in the second half of the twelfth century and

[12] The Latin text is reproduced in the Bonn edition, in the volume with Nicephorus Bryennius, p. 181. There is a Greek translation made from a good original Latin text. E. Légrand, *Description des îles de l'Archipel par Chr. Buondelmonti* (Paris, 1897), p. 88: ἐν αὐτῷ δὲ τῷ ναῷ ἐφθαρμένῳ ἤδη ὑπὸ τοῦ χρόνου. See also p. XXXIII.

[13] *De Cerimoniis aulae byzantinae*, II, cap. 42; Bonn ed., pp. 642–649.

[14] See J. B. Bury, *The Ceremonial Book of Constantine Porphyrogennetos*, *The English Historical Review*, 1907, April, pp. 217–219.

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at the beginning of the thirteenth. After the sack of Constantinople by the crusaders in 1204, he remained in the city, but shortly after emigrated to Nicaea, and became archbishop of Ephesus. He had described the mosaics of the Holy Apostles and the sarcophagi as an eyewitness shortly before 1204, i.e. before the sack of the capital. He mentions only thirteen large, monumental sarcophagi.[15]

Then we have a brief list of imperial sarcophagi in *Constantinopolis Christiana* by Ducange. In this list the anonymous author attempts to enumerate, sometimes erroneously, all sarcophagi of the Church of the Holy Apostles and ends the list with that of Constantine VIII, who as we know was the last emperor buried in this church. Ducange's list was compiled soon after the death of this emperor.[16]

Finally in his *Imperium Orientale* Banduri at the beginning of the eighteenth century also published a list of imperial sarcophagi, in which, repeating the errors of Ducange's list, he makes some additional statements from an earlier list of the emperors.[17]

Sporadic mentions of the imperial sarcophagi occur, of course, in many texts of Byzantine historians and chroniclers.

For our purpose the first two lists, that of *Ceremonies of the Byzantine Court* and that of Nicholas Mesarites, are of decisive consequence.

In the *Ceremonies* we read the following description of the imperial porphyry sarcophagi.

Chapter 42. On the imperial tombs which are in the Church of the Holy Apostles.

The shrine (Ἡρῷον) of the Holy and Great Constantine. First in the eastern part (of the shrine) is found the porphyry, i.e. Roman, sarcophagus (ὁ λάρναξ) of the Holy Constantine, in which he himself rests with Helena his mother of blessed memory. There is another Roman porphyry sarcophagus, in which rests the son of the Great Constantine, Constantius. There is another Roman porphyry sarcophagus, in which Theodosius the Great (the Elder) . . . There is another Roman porphyry sarcophagus, in which rests Marcian (450–457) with his wife Pulcheria . . .

The colonnaded structure (στοά) to the south of the same Church. In this (structure) are found the sarcophagi of Arcadius (395–408), his son Theodosius (408–450), and the latter's mother Eudoxia. The tomb of Arcadius is located southwards, that of Theodosius northwards, and that of Eudoxia eastwards. All three (sarcophagi) are in porphyry, i.e. Roman.

The colonnaded structure (στοά) to the north of the same Church. In this northern structure there is a sarcophagus cylindrical in form (κυλινδροειδής) in which lies the

[15] A. Heisenberg, *Die Apostelkirche in Konstantinopel* (Leipzig, 1908), pp. 1–8; 106–109. Heisenberg discovered the manuscript of Nicholas Mesarites' work in the Ambrosiana Library of Milan in 1898.

[16] Ducange, *Constantinopolis Christiana* (Paris, 1680), IV, pp. 109–110.

[17] Banduri, *Imperium Orientale*, I (Paris, 1711), p. 121. Banduri's list has been reprinted in the Bonn edition of Codinus, *De antiquitatibus Constantinopolis*, pp. 202–203, and in Migne, *P. G.*, CLVII, cols. 725–740.

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wretched and all-abominable (δύστηνον καὶ παμμίαρον) body of the transgressor (παραβάτου, i.e. Apostate) Julian; (his sarcophagus) is porphyry, i.e. Roman in colour. There is another porphyry or Roman sarcophagus, in which rests the body of Jovian, who reigned after Julian.[18]

Thus in the *Ceremonies* nine porphyry sarcophagi are listed. The last emperor who was laid to rest in a porphyry sarcophagus was Marcian, who died in 457. His wife Pulcheria who was buried with him in the same sarcophagus had died several years before her husband.

Now let us reproduce here the information on imperial porphyry sarcophagi which we gain from *The Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles* by Nicholas Mesarites. He writes as follows.

The Mausoleum of Constantine.

39. But let us go, if you please, also to this church, which lies eastwards, and see what is there worthy of admiration and description, — to the church whose builder, as it has been said above, is Constantius. This whole spherical and circular (σφαιροειδὴς καὶ κυκλικός) church, on account of the vastness of its size, I believe, was divided into several parts by the columns which were set close to each other; because it had been built to receive the body of his father, of himself, and their successors. Thus, eastwards, in the first place, in this porphyry coloured sarcophagus, as if on the imperial crown, which blossoms from the earth,[19] rests the body of the first Christian Emperor Constantine, the thirteenth Apostle after the twelve, a preacher of the Orthodox faith, and the founder of this imperial city. The sarcophagus is four-sided and oblong but not equilateral (with equal sides; ἰσόπλευρος). It is said that his mother Helena, his helper in propagating the Orthodox faith, was buried together with her son. (The sarcophagus) of the famous Constantius, the builder of the church, also porphyry-coloured, lies southwards; but it is not identical with the tomb of his father, because he who rests in this sarcophagus (i.e. Constantius) is not entirely like his father, being inferior to him and falling short in paternal piety and high spirit. The sarcophagus lying north and facing the latter sarcophagus, closely resembling the sarcophagi already mentioned, contains the body of the great Theodosius, as an inexhaustible treasure (πλοῦτος) of noble deeds. The sarcophagus lying eastwards and quite close to the latter is that of Pulcheria. She is the famous and renowned builder of the Monastery of the Hodegetria (τῶν Ὁδηγῶν).[20]

[18] *De Cerimoniis*, II, cap. 42, p. 642; 646.

[19] These words are not very clear: ὡς ἐπί τινος πορφυρανθούσης βασιλείου ἐκ· γῆς. Heisenberg supposes that ἡ βασίλειος here is the name of a plant like τὸ βασιλικόν (p. 82, n. 3). In 1913, R. Egger made a fine correction reading ἐκ εὐνῆς for ἐκ γῆς; so that this passage may be translated: "[the body of Constantine] is laid to rest within this purple-hued sarcophagus as though on some purple-blooming royal couch." R. Egger, Die Begräbnisstätte des Kaisers Konstantin, Jahreshefte des österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts in Wien, XVI (Wien, 1913), p. 218. For this information and translation I am greatly indebted to Professor Glanville Downey, of Dumbarton Oaks.

[20] A. Heisenberg, *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche*. II. *Die Apostelkirche in Konstantinopel* (Leipzig, 1908), pp. 81–83 (Greek text with a German translation). The Church of the Hodegetria or τῶν Ὁδηγῶν was the most important church in Constantinople dedicated to the Theotokos (Mother of God) on account of the famous eikon (icon) of the Theotokos Hodegetria. No relic was held in higher estimation.

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From this text we see that Nicholas Mesarites' description includes neither the tombs of the southern portico nor those of the northern; in other words, he mentions only the porphyry sarcophagi which were found in the sepulchral section of Constantine's family, namely the sarcophagi of Constantine and Helena, of Constantius and of Theodosius the Elder. The material of the sarcophagus in which the body of Pulcheria, the wife of the Emperor Marcian, rested is not designated; the name of Marcian himself, who according to the *Ceremonies* was buried with Pulcheria, is also lacking.

The list which we have in Ducange's *Constantinopolis Christiana* mentions eight porphyry sarcophagi identical with those of the *Ceremonies*; only one porphyry sarcophagus is missing, that of Marcian and his wife Pulcheria. In his *Imperium Orientale* Banduri lists all nine porphyry sarcophagi which we find in the *Ceremonies*, and gives the name of those who were put in these sarcophagi.

Thus the literary evidence supplies us with nine porphyry sarcophagi, in which rested the first eight Eastern Christian emperors of Constantinople, and the wife of the Emperor Arcadius, Eudoxia. Here is the list of the emperors: 1) Constantine the Great (324–337); 2) Constantius (337–361); 3) Julian the Apostate (361–363), who was brought up in the Christian religion; 4) Jovian (363–364); 5) Valens (364–378); 6) Theodosius I the Elder or the Great (379–395); 7) Arcadius (395–408); 8) Theodosius II the Younger (408–450); 9) Marcian (450–457), the last emperor who was honored with a porphyry sarcophagus. As we see from this list, there is no sarcophagus for Valens, who either fell in the disastrous battle of Adrianople in 378 against the Goths, or perished in a cottage fired by them. His body was not found.

Neither are there sarcophagi for the emperors, or coemperors of the Eastern emperors of that time, who ruled in the West. Constantius, whose porphyry sarcophagus has been mentioned, began his rule in 337 with his two brothers and coemperors, Constantine II and Constans. In 340 Constantine II was assassinated in northern Italy; his body was thrown into the little river Alsa, and, as Seeck says, soon after his memory was outlawed. In an official document Constantius calls him "the public enemy and ours" (*Publicus ac noster inimicus*), and in some inscriptions Constantine's name was erased. Of course such a ruler would not have been honored with a formal imperial burial.[21] Constantius' second brother and coemperor, Constans, was mur-

[21] O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt*, IV, 2d ed. (Stuttgart, 1922), p. 47 and note on p. 400. *Cod. Theod.*, XI, 12, 1 (April 29, 340); ed. Mommsen, p. 594. *Corpus Inscr. Lat.*, V, 2, no. 8030 (p. 944). *Ephemeris epigraphica. Corporis inscriptionum latinarum supplementum*, V (Rome, Berlin, 1884), no. 303 (p. 287). In this inscription the names of both Constantine and Constans are erased; only that of Constantius remains.

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dered far away in the west, in south Gaul, at the foot of the Pyrenees.[22] The hypothesis of Delbrück that the sarcophagi which contained the bodies of Theodosius I and Marcian might have been originally designated for Constantius' brothers, Constantine II and Constans, who met violent deaths in the West, is without serious foundation.[23]

There is a very interesting record about the western Emperor Valentinian I, who died in 375. The chronicler of the sixth century, Comes Marcellinus, writes that the Emperor Theodosius I in 382 ordered the body "of the Divine Valentinian the Great" to be brought from Italy, and buried it in a royal sepulcher at the imperial court. The words *regio in sepulcro* may imply that Valentinian's body was put in a porphyry sarcophagus; but since no sarcophagus with his name is listed in our evidence, we may surmise either that his sarcophagus was placed in some other imperial burial place unknown to us or that reference to it is omitted in our records. There are some other members of imperial dynasties who may have been buried at the Church of the Holy Apostles on whom we have no positive evidence.[24]

As to other western emperors of the fourth and fifth centuries, Gratian was killed at Lyons in Gaul by Androgathius in 383 and did not even have any burial service; Valentinian II was murdered at Vienne in Gaul in 372; Valentinian III was assassinated in Italy in 455. All these emperors who met violent deaths far away in the West of course had no imperial sarcophagi in Constantinople.

Let us now turn to those porphyry sarcophagi which at present actually exist in Constantinople.

It has long been known that on the grounds of the former Byzantine Church of St. Eirene stood several archaeological monuments of the Christian period; among them were five porphyry sarcophagi. Soon after the Turkish conquest the church was enclosed within the grounds of the Seraglio, the imperial residence of the new masters. Situated in the court occupied by the corps of janissaries which guarded the palace of the Sultan, the church was not converted into a mosque, but into an armory, an arsenal of arms and

[22] Seeck, *op. cit.*, IV, 91; note on p. 423. See in preceding note *Ephemeris epigraphica*, V, no. 303, where I have mentioned that Constans' name was erased in this inscription.

[23] Delbrück, *Antike Porphyrwerke*, p. 222. Delbrück himself, however, remarks: "sicher ist das allerdings nicht."

[24] Comes Marcellinus, a. 382: "Divi Valentiniani magni cadavere Theodosius princeps ab Italia reportato, apud Comitatum regio in sepulchro recondidit." Migne, *P.L.*, LI, col. 918; ed. Mommsen, *Chronica Minora*, II, p. 61. In the imperial period, especially since Diocletian, *comitatus* very often means "the imperial court," "the imperial residence." On the fact that some members of imperial dynasties who might have been buried at the Church of the Holy Apostles were buried outside it in some unknown place, see Heisenberg, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 116–117. See also Delbrück, *op. cit.*, pp. 222–223.

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military trophies, which was not accessible to members of the public unless they were provided with special permits. After the establishment of the Constitutional Government in Turkey, the church was turned into a Museum of Arms and was thrown open to the public. Under the Sultan Abd-ul-Medjid (1839–1861) the sarcophagi were transferred from the Seraglio to the grounds of St. Eirene. A Turkish inscription which is found in the second yard of the Seraglio deals with this fact. In this yard, planted with cypresses and magnificent plane trees, is a portico supported by marble columns (Fig. 1) on one of which is engraved the inscription to which I have just referred (Fig. 2). It runs as follows: "The lids of the two sarcophagi bodies which were extracted and transferred to the depot of ammunitions [i.e. to St. Eirene] are to be found under the plane tree at a distance of about ten pics from this column; [here it is announced] that it was not possible to have them extracted [earlier]. The first of the month of Redjeb, 1263" [the fifteenth of June, 1847].[25]

In 1916 the Administration of the Ottoman Museums undertook excavations in the place indicated and discovered two porphyry sarcophagi lids (Fig. 3). With much care and precaution the lids were safely extracted from under the plane tree. The operation was very delicate, because the roots of the platan were stuck to the lids, and the Administration was very anxious to preserve the magnificent tree (Fig. 4). On the same column beneath the inscription cited above another Turkish inscription was engraved, which runs as follows: "The lids of the sarcophagi mentioned in the above inscription were extracted by special authorization of His Majesty the Sultan by the Administration of the Imperial Museums and transported at the same time as the bodies which were found outside of St. Eirene, to the Imperial Museum. The First of Muharrem 1335" (the eighteenth of October, 1916).

Thus in 1916 two lids from the Old Seraglio and three porphyry sarcophagi from St. Eirene were transported to the Ottoman Museum (Fig. 5). Of these three sarcophagi one had its lid; the other two did not. The two missing lids were found in the Old Seraglio and reinstated on their appropriate bodies, so that there are now three complete porphyry sarcophagi, which stand in front of the Ottoman Museum (Fig. 6). The two porphyry sarcophagi which stood in the ancient atrium of St. Eirene, one with its lid, the other without, were both left there.[26]

[25] *Pic* is a Turkish measure of length. *Pike* or *diran* in Turkey is 27 inches; *pic* in Cyprus two feet; *picki* in Greece 0.648 metres. All these names go back to the Greek word πῆχυς — an elbow, which is also a measure of length, from the point of the elbow to the point of the middle finger.

[26] I have taken all my information about the transportation and reconstruction of the above sarcophagi from Jean Ebersolt, *Mission archéologique de Constantinople* (Paris, 1921), pp. 1–6.

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In 1910 the rectangular body of a porphyry sarcophagus without its lid, which had been found near the Column of Marcian, was transferred to the Museum. Since the Column of Marcian is located not far from the place where the Church of the Holy Apostles once stood, the sarcophagus certainly belonged to the imperial burial grounds of this church.[27] Two French travelers of the sixteenth century, Pierre Gylli (Gyllius) and Jean Palerne, noted in their books that "near the Mosque of Muhammed II, i.e. near the emplacement where had once stood the Church of the Holy Apostles, in a by-street near the saddle-bazaar," they saw an empty porphyry sarcophagus without a lid. It is evident that they referred to the body of the sarcophagus which we have just mentioned. The local Greeks and Turks told Gylli that it was the sarcophagus of Constantine the Great. Palerne also wrote that he had seen the sepulcher of Constantine.[28]

In the yard of the mosque Nuri-Osmaniye there is also a rectangular body of a porphyry sarcophagus. At the end of the eighteenth century the traveler Salabery saw at Nuri-Osmaniye a "magnificent block of porphyry," and observed that the lid of the sarcophagus was lying near by. As usual in popular tradition, this sarcophagus also was said to be the sepulcher of Constantine. The English traveler Hobhouse, who visited Constantinople at the beginning of the nineteenth century, also saw the body of this sarcophagus, which at that time served as a receptacle for rain water; but the lid had already disappeared. Perhaps this is the sarcophagus which had been already mentioned as the sepulcher of Constantine by two earlier travelers of the sixteenth century, Nicolay and Breünig.[29]

Shortly before 1920 part of the body of a porphyry sarcophagus was found on the Seraglio point near the railroad bridge in the ground half a meter beneath the surface. Whether to this body or to some other sarcophagus without lid are to be attributed two fragments of a porphyry lid which are now found in front of the Museum, it is difficult to decide. Finally, a fragment of the longer side of a porphyry sarcophagus was transferred from St. Eirene to the Museum.

It is interesting to emphasize that the actual remains of the porphyry sar-

[27] A detailed description of the body of this sarcophagus in red porphyry, which is in rather a bad state of preservation, is given in G. Mendel, *Catalogue des sculptures grecques, romaines et byzantines des Musées Impériaux Ottomans*, III (Constantinople, 1914), 419, no. 1175 (239). A preliminary notice by Th. Macridy Bey, *Erwerbungen des Kaiserlichen Ottomanischen Museums in Konstantinopel im Jahre 1911. Jahrbuch des Archäologischen Instituts*, XXVII (1912), *Archäologischer Anzeiger*, col. 587, no. 21. See also Ebersolt, *Mission*, p. 6.

[28] See J. Ebersolt, *Constantinople byzantine et les voyageurs du Levant* (Paris, 1919), pp. 81; 106.

[29] Ebersolt, *Constantinople byzantine*, pp. 200; 213-214; 87; 105. *Idem*, *Mission*, p. 7 and n. 5.

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cophagi which we have fully confirm our literary evidence. The latter mentions nine imperial sarcophagi in porphyry. Our archaeological remains give the same number – nine: 1–2) the two sarcophagi reconstructed in 1916; 3) one complete sarcophagus transported from St. Eirene; 4–5) the two sarcophagi in the interior atrium of St. Eirene; 6) the body of a porphyry sarcophagus found near the Column of Marcian and transferred to the Museum; 7) the body in the yard of the mosque Nuri-Osmaniye; 8) a fragment found near the railroad bridge; and 9) a sculptural fragment of a long side of the sarcophagus from St. Eirene.

The sarcophagi which have come down to us are remarkably simple in their rather austere form, with little ornament (Figs. 7–8). The two complete rectangular sarcophagi have two sloping lids with acroteria; on the frontons of both sarcophagi we have the monogrammatic cross with a loop on the top which is carved within a laurel wreath tied beneath by a ribbon with loose ends (Fig. 9). The upper part of the cross on sarcophagus I is flanked by the letters A and Ω, which are lacking on sarcophagus II.[30]

The third complete sarcophagus, which was transferred from St. Eirene to the Museum and now stands in front of it, is of an entirely different type (Fig. 10). On all four corners of the sarcophagus there are round, cylindrical shafts, which starting from the base go up to the ends of the lid. Instead of two sloping lids like the other sarcophagi this sargophagus has a semicircular lid; it has neither monograms nor ornaments of any kind.

The fourth full sarcophagus, which remained in St. Eirene, is identical with the first two sarcophagi (Fig. 11); but the cross is the Egyptian cross, the so-called *crux ansata*, with a loop in the upper part, in Egyptian the *ankh*, the old Egyptian symbol of life, so that the monogram of Christ is reproduced within the loop. The three sarcophagi without lids, nos. 5, 6, and 7, are devoid of any ornament (Figs. 12, 13, 14). On sarcophagus no. 5 there are some cracks and very vague contours, seemingly of reliefs; but we cannot be sure of this. A fragment of the body of a sarcophagus, no. 8, which was discovered shortly before 1920 near the railroad bridge, has only moldings (no reproduction). Finally we have a fragment of a long side of a porphyry sarcophagus, no. 9 (Fig. 15). This fragment is decorated with elaborate sculptural reliefs of foliage, acanthus leaves, naked Erotes who are celebrating grape-gathering, and birds pecking at grapes.[31]

[30] See Ebersolt, *Mission*, p. 12; plates XIII, 1; XIV, 1; XV. Delbrück, *Antike Porphyrwerke*, pp. 224–225, 5–6; plates 109, 1–2. O. Sermed Moukhtar, *Musée militaire Ottoman*, Guide no. 1 (Constantinople, 1920). I have not seen this book.

[31] G. Mendel, *Catalogue des sculptures grecques, romaines et byzantines des Musées Ottomans*, II (Constantinople, 1914), pp. 447–448 (detailed description); pictures on p. 447. Ebersolt, *Mission*, p. 8, n. IX. Delbrück, *op. cit.*, p. 219 (Rankenfries). See also Strzygowski,

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The question where the sarcophagi were made, in Egypt or in Constantinople, must be decided, I believe, in favor of Egypt. Pliny wrote that under Claudius statues already sculptured were sent from Egypt to Rome. Also the presence of the Egyptian *ankh* (*crux ansata*) on one of our sarcophagi allows us to suppose that several if not all of the sarcophagi were made in Egypt and were already completed when they were delivered to Constantinople. For confirmation of this supposition we may point out that in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria has been preserved the lid of a porphyry sarcophagus found in an Arab bath with the reliefs of a human head on each side of the lid; garlands run from both sides of the heads toward the extremities of the lid [32] (Fig. 16). The closest analogy to the lid of the Museum of Alexandria is the lid of the Vatican porphyry sarcophagus known as that of Constantia, which we shall discuss later.

Certainly in their original shape the porphyry sarcophagi of the Byzantine emperors were not so austere in their simplicity as we see them now. Both the sarcophagi themselves and the imperial bodies which were buried within them were lavishly adorned with gold, silver, and precious stones, lying in precious textiles. Some very vague traces of former exterior ornamentation may be discerned even on reproductions of the sarcophagi.

Nicetas Choniates, the Byzantine historian of the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, supplies us with a very interesting text referring to this question. Nicetas deals with the nineties of the twelfth century, when the German king and Western Emperor, the young and energetic Henry VI Hohenstaufen, was threatening to open a campaign against Constantinople. The Byzantine Emperor Alexius III Angelus (1195–1203) could buy peace only by paying to Henry an enormous amount of money; for this purpose he introduced in the Empire a particularly heavy and unpopular tax, which was called "Alamanian" (ἀλαμανικόν). In order to collect the due sum, the Emperor decided to resort to an exceptional measure: namely, he took precious ornaments from the imperial tombs. The story told by Nicetas runs as follows:

[The Emperor] began to demand all golden and silver church offerings, except those which were on the altar and those [vessels] which were ready to receive the divine body and blood of Christ. Since many objected to this and said that (the Emperor) wished to defile sacred things, he decided to attack the voiceless and mute Imperial sepulchers, which had no one to protect them. Thus the sepulchers were robbed, so

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Orient oder Rom (Leipzig, 1901), p. 79; fig. 36. In 1947, this fragment was sent from Istanbul to Baltimore for the exhibition held at the Baltimore Museum of Art, organized by the Walters Art Gallery, April 25–June 22. See *Early Christian and Byzantine Art, An Exhibition held at the Baltimore Museum of Art* (Baltimore, 1947), p. 28 (no. 34).

[32] See Strzygowski, *op. cit.*, p. 79; fig. 37. Delbrück, *op. cit.*, p. 219; plate 105.

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that to those who had once ruled over the Romans and who had been famous for their deeds, have remained only the stone chitons [χιτῶνες], the cold and last cover devoid of any precious ornament. And even the sepulcher of the Great Constantine would not have remained untouched and unrobbed, if the thieves who had forestalled the imperial decision had not stolen the golden ornaments [before that time]. After collecting thus more than seventy centenaria [κεντηνάρια] of silver and a certain amount of gold, he [the Emperor] put [all this] like any profane material into the smelting furnace.[33]

We have now before us, accordingly, unadorned, these "cold and last stone chitons" of the Byzantine emperors.

About 1200, shortly before the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204, the Russian pilgrim Anthony, archbishop of Novgorod, visited Constantinople and its shrines. In the Church of the Holy Apostles he mentions only the sarcophagus of Constantine and Helena; he writes, "and in the Church of the Holy Apostles the Emperor (Tsar) Constantine with his mother lie in the same tomb." [34]

Then in the brief treatise *On the Statues of the City of Constantinople*, which is usually printed among the works of Nicetas Choniates and attributed to him, we have the following passage, which deals with the sack of the city by the Crusaders in 1204:

From the beginning, as it is said [ἐκ πρώτης γραμμῆς], revealing their natural love of gold, [the Franks] invent a new form of robbery, which had come to the mind of no one who had sacked the capital [before]. Namely, opening all the imperial sepulchers, which are found in the mausoleum [τῷ ἡρῴῳ] which had been built near the main temple of the Disciples of Christ, they robbed all of them in the night and sacrilegiously [παναθεμίτως] took away golden ornaments, pearls and radiant [διανγής] precious stones which were still found in the sepulchers.[35]

Thus we have two stories of the two attacks on the imperial sarcophagi: Alexius Angelus stripped off the exterior ornaments of the sepulchers, but failed to touch those within. The Crusaders in 1204 robbed the interiors of the tombs.

After the restoration of Constantinople to the Empire in 1261, under the Palaeologi who opened the new and last dynasty of the Byzantine Empire, the sepulchers were repaired, although they could not certainly have been returned to their former state of opulence and brilliancy. According to

[33] Nicetas Choniata, pp. 631–632. Κεντηνάριον – centenarium is a weight of 100 lbs. (100 λίτραι).

[34] *The Book of the Pilgrim Anthony, Archbishop of Novgorod* (in Old Russian); ed. by Savvaïtov (St. Petersburg, 1872), p. 108; ed. by Ch. Loparev, *Pravoslavny Palestinsky Sbornik*, vol. LI (1899), p. 24. In French by Mme. B. de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires russes en Orient*, I, 1 (Geneva, 1889), p. 101.

[35] *Nic. Chon.*, p. 855. On this *Treatise on the Statues* see Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur* (1897), pp. 283–284. This work, however, may not belong to Nicetas Choniates. See F. Uspensky, *The Byzantine Writer Nicetas Acominates from Chonai* (St. Petersburg, 1874), pp. 140–143 (in Russian).

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Ebersolt, one of the lids of the porphyry sarcophagi under consideration has traces of repairs.[36]

About 1350 the Russian pilgrim Stephen of Novgorod visited Constantinople and wrote the following lines on the imperial sepulchers in the Church of the Holy Apostles: "Behind the altar, right eastwards, stands the tomb of the Emperor Constantine; it is very large and made of a stone similar to slate; there are also many other imperial sepulchers; but not all emperors are saints. And we, sinners, embraced and venerated them." [37]

The noted Byzantine humanist, Manuel Chrysoloras, who lived in the second half of the fourteenth century and at the beginning of the fifteenth (he died at Constance in 1415), in his letter to the Emperor John V (1341–1391), devotes a few lines to the imperial sarcophagi, which he saw in the Church of the Holy Apostles. With great admiration Manuel looked at the sepulcher of the Emperor, "the founder and protector of the city, and the sepulchers of other emperors which were near it in the imperial burial place"; then he adds, "Many sepulchers still stand around, near the Church of the Apostles; but many of them have already perished, and some are found in other places of the city, in the atriums [of other churches]." [38]

The Russian pilgrim Ignatius of Smolensk, who was in Constantinople from 1389 to 1393, wrote that in the Church of the Apostles "there were the imperial sepulchers of the Great Constantine, the Great Theodosius, and Theodosius the Younger and many others." [39] The Russian scribe Alexander, who visited Constantinople in 1393 "for purchases," saw in the Church of the Apostles the sepulcher of the Holy Emperor Constantine and his mother Helena.[40] During his second journey to the Near East, the monk Zosimus, of the Troïtze-Serguievsky Monastery, near Moscow, visited Constantinople in

[36] Ebersolt, *Mission*, p. 23.

[37] *The Pilgrimage of Stephen of Novgorod* (in Old Russian); ed. J. P. Sakharov, *The Tales of the Russian People* (St. Petersburg, 1849), II, book VIII, p. 54. In French by Khitrovo, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

[38] *Manuelis Chrysolorae Epistola ad Joannem imperatorem*: Τί γὰρ ὁ τοῦ κτίστου μὲν καὶ πολιούχου βασιλέως τάφος, καὶ οἱ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ βασιλικοῦ πολυανδρίου, ὃ μόνον θαῦμα ἦν ἰδεῖν, πολλοὶ μὲν κύκλῳ σωζόμενοι περὶ τὸν ναὸν τῶν Ἀποστόλων, πολλοὶ δὲ ἤδη καὶ ἀπολωλότες, καὶ ἄλλοι δὲ ἀλλαχοῦ τῆς πόλεως ἐπὶ τῶν προνάων. Migne, *P. G.*, CLVI, col. 45. This letter is known under the title ἡ σύγκρισις, i.e., the comparison between the Old and New Rome. On John V Palaeologus as addressee of this letter see *Manuelis Chrysolorae Vita*, in Migne, *P.G.*, CLVI, cols. 17–20. Cfr. Giuseppe Cammelli, *Manuele Crisoloras* (Firenze, 1941), pp. 157–158. Cammelli seems to disagree with the attribution of the letter to the Emperor, calling it simply "lettera a Giovanni Paleologo."

[39] *Pilgrimage (Khoždenie) of Ignatius of Smolensk*, ed. by Arsenyev, *Pravoslavny Palestinsky Sbornik*, XII (1887), 8. Former edition of Sakharov, *The Tales (Skazaniya) of the Russian People* (St. Petersburg, 1849), II, p. 101. In Russian. In French by Khitrowo, I, 1, p. 136.

[40] Sakharov, *The Tales of the Russian People*, II (St. Petersburg, 1849), p. 72. In French, by Khitrowo, p. 162.

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1419 and wrote: "In the Church of the Holy Apostles there are the sepulchers of the Tsar Constantine and his mother Helena, and of many other Orthodox Tsars." [41] An Italian from Florence, Buondelmonti, whom we have already referred to above, visited Constantinople about 1420 and after mentioning that the Church of the Apostles was in a state of decay, wrote, "[In this church] are seen very rich and magnificent imperial sepulchers in porphyry, along with the huge sepulcher of Constantine." [42]

After the capture of Constantinople in 1453, the Turks pillaged the city and did not miss the imperial tombs. A later anonymous Greek writer notes that "among other horrors one could have seen how the sarcophagi of the emperors were opened and defiled; (the Turks) did this hoping to find some golden textiles." [43] A contemporary of the fall of Constantinople, the Greek historian Critobulus, writing of general pillaging of the tombs, says: "The tombs of the ancient and blessed men were opened and their remains were extracted and perished under the influence of the air." In another place, the same writer describes how the ancient sepulchers and sarcophagi were broken open.[44]

Theodore Spandugino, the "Constantinopolitan patrician," who was born about 1453, spent a very interesting and strenuous life, and died some time after 1538. In his book on the origin of the Ottoman emperors, he also has left us information on the destruction of the imperial tombs by the Turks. We read: "And in addition to this, [the Turks] broke and destroyed all the beautiful sepulchers of the emperors and other princes of Greece, in order to find diadems, golden spurs, and other military ornaments, with which the emperors and the princes had usually been buried." [45]

If the Turks hoped to extract much from the imperial tombs, they were disappointed. Most precious ornaments of any sort had been taken away before 1453. The sarcophagi themselves were not thoroughly destroyed, but of course many of them were badly damaged and broken. But after the mosque of Muhammed the Conqueror was erected in the place of the Church

[41] Sakharov, *op. cit.*, II, p. 61; ed. by Loparev, *Pravoslavny Palestinsky Sbornik*, XXIV (1889), p. 6. In French by Khitrowo, p. 203.

[42] "et amplissima omnia sepulcra imperatorum porphyrea videntur magnifica, una cum Constantini immenso." Chr. Buondelmonti, *Descriptio urbis Constantinopoleos*, Bonn ed., p. 181 (in the volume with *Nicephori Bryennii Commentarii*). In Greek from a good Latin original, by E. Legrand, *Description des îles de l'Archipel par Chr. Buondelmonti, version grecque par un anonyme publiée d'après le manuscrit du Sérail* (Paris, 1897), p. 88.

[43] *Historia politica et patriarchica Constantinopoleos* (Bonn, 1849), p. 21: ἦν ὁρᾶν μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων δεινῶν καὶ τὰ τῶν βασιλέων μνήματα ἀνοιγόμενα καὶ ἐμπαιζόμενα τοῦτο δὲ ἐποίουν ἐλπίζοντες εὑρίσκειν τι τῶν χρυσῶν ὑφασμάτων. *Ecthesis Chronica*, ed. by S. Lambros (London, 1902), p. 15 (Byzantine Texts, ed. by J. B. Bury).

[44] *Critobuli Historiae*, I, 62: ἠνοίγοντο δὲ θῆκαι τῶν παλαιῶν καὶ μακαρίων ἀνδρῶν καὶ τὰ τούτων ἐξήγετο λείψανα καὶ ἀτίμως λεπτυνόμενα καὶ λυόμενα ἐς ἀέρα ἐλικμᾶτο; I, 66: θήκας τε παλαιὰς καὶ

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of the Holy Apostles, the empty sarcophagi were removed into various regions of the city; and from time to time travelers who visited Constantinople mention them in their descriptions.

When we question to which emperor each of our nine sarcophagi belonged, I must admit that concerning seven of them we are unable to come to any conclusion, definite or even tentative. As for the remaining two, one of them, I believe, may be attributed with absolute certainty, the other with probability.

We have already pointed out that one sarcophagus differs from all the others in its external form: this is the sarcophagus with round shafts and a semi-circular lid; this is no doubt the sarcophagus cylindrical in form (*κυλινδροειδής*), as it is called in the *Ceremonies of the Byzantine Court*, in other words this is the sarcophagus of Julian the Apostate. It is true that the Byzantine historians of the twelfth century, Georgius Cedrenus and Zonaras, speak of an inscription in verse which was on Julian's sarcophagus. Julian is known to have been struck by an arrow and to have died in the East, during his Persian campaign. Cedrenus writes that

his wretched body was removed to Constantinople and put in a cylindrical porphyry sarcophagus [*ἐν λάρνακι πορφυρᾷ κυλινδροειδεῖ*] upon which the following poem [*ἐλεγεῖον*] was inscribed:

> On the silvery Cydnus, near the waters of the Euphrates,
> In the country of Persia, having moved the army
> For an unaccomplished action, Julian has received this tomb [*σῆμα*],
> Both the noted emperor and the powerful warrior.[46]

Zonaras relates: "The army brought his body to the Cilician Tarsus and buried it in a suburb of the city. The following epigram was inscribed upon his tomb" [*τῷ τάφῳ*]. (The text is identical with the text from Cedrenus). "Later," Zonaras proceeds, "[his body] was removed to the capital." [47]

On the sarcophagus which has come down to us there are no traces of

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τάφους ἀναρρηγνύντες. *Fragmenta historicorum graecorum*, ed. C. Müller, V, 1 (Paris, 1870), 96; 98.

[45] Theodoro Spandugino, patritio constantinopolitano, *De la origine deli imperatori Ottomani, ordini de la corte, forma del guerreggiare loro, religione, rito, et costume de la natione*, in C. Sathas, *Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce au moyen âge*, IX (Paris, 1890), p. 154: "Et oltra di questo, (the Turks) ruppero et fracassorono in tutte le sepulture belle de imperatori et altri principi de Grecia, et questo per trovar le diademe et sproni d'oro et altri ornamenti militari, con liquali erano soliti sepelirsi li principi et signori." Spandugino's biography in the preface, pp. III–XXXI. Among other sources, Spandugino amply used the *History* of Critobulus. See the previous note.

[46] Cedrenus, I, p. 539.

[47] Zonaras, XIII, 13, 23–25; ed. Dindorf, III, 215; Bonn ed., III, 68.

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inscription. But it is possible that the inscription was not carved on the sarcophagus itself but attached to it in some way or other and that it has disappeared. In this connection we must particularly emphasize the laudatory tone of the inscription, which would have been absolutely inacceptable to Julian's successors, who were devout Christians. The inscription must have been compiled immediately after Julian's death, among his legions and followers. Under his successor Jovian, who restored Christianity, the inscription was inadmissible and therefore removed. At any rate there can be no doubt whatever that this sarcophagus belonged to Julian.[48]

I wish to mention here a very interesting although not fully confirmed hypothesis of Delbrück's. He emphasizes the Egyptian form of this sarcophagus although he admits himself that he knows no exact analogy. Then, referring to the fact that the later Ptolemies were no longer burnt but buried, he brings forward the hypothesis that the sarcophagus which later was used in Constantinople to contain Julian's body seems originally to have belonged to a Ptolemy.[49] So far I have not sufficient grounds to accept Delbrück's hypothesis, which is not supported by any serious evidence. But in any case Delbrück is certain that our sarcophagus belonged to Julian.

Of course it is an extremely interesting question whether it would be possible to identify the sarcophagus of the first Christian emperor and the founder of Constantinople, Constantine the Great. We do not find much material on this particular sarcophagus in our literary evidence, which I have given above. Nicholas Mesarites describes it as "four-sided and elongated, but not equilateral," in other words as rectangular, which is entirely consistent with any of our sarcophagi. But at the same time the same author, describing the sarcophagus of Constantine's son, Constantius, emphasizes that the latter's sarcophagus was not identical with the sepulcher of his father, because Constantius was inferior to him and lacking in the paternal piety and high spirit.[50] These words of Nicholas Mesarites in my opinion may mean only that the sarcophagus of Constantine was more magnificent and more richly ornamented than that of Constantius. Nicetas Choniates says that the sarcophagus of Constantine was originally decorated with golden ornaments which had been stolen by thieves before Alexius Angelus started to strip from the sarcophagi their precious ornaments. Buondelmonti calls the sarcophagus of Constantine *immensus*. No porphyry sarcophagus which we have now can be called *immensus* in comparison with the other

[48] Ebersolt (*Mission*, p. 13) hesitates to identify this sarcophagus definitely, saying that the description by the Byzantine authors is not sufficiently exact.

[49] Delbrück, *op. cit.*, p. 14; 27; 227.

[50] Heisenberg, *Die Apostelkirche in Konstantinopel* (Leipzig, 1908), p. 82.

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sarcophagi. Measurements have been taken of all our sarcophagi. Some difference in size of course does exist; but this difference is not so striking as to allow us to designate any one as *immensus*.

But we have a fragment of a longer side of a sarcophagus, which we have designated as no. 9 (Fig. 15). This fragment clearly shows that it belonged to a quite different type of sarcophagus; as the fragment reveals, it was very richly decorated with elaborate sculptural reliefs of foliage, acanthus leaves, naked Erotes celebrating grape-gathering, and birds pecking at grapes. In view of the exceptional external decorations of this sarcophagus, which has been preserved only in our fragment, one may suppose that it belonged to a highly venerated emperor, namely the first Christian emperor, Constantine. I stress here again the description of Nicholas Mesarites, who emphasizes the exceptional magnificence of the sarcophagus of Constantine in comparison with that of his son Constantius.

Our authorities in Byzantine art on the basis of our fragment have already proclaimed that the sarcophagus to which the fragment belonged was a duplicate of the famous porphyry sarcophagus of St. Constantia (Sta. Constanza) in the Vatican galleries, which has on its sides decorations of Erotes gathering and pressing grapes, peacocks, lambs, and ornaments of vine-scrolls (Fig. 17). The sarcophagus of St. Constantia is attributed to the period between 354 and 360,[51] in other words, to the time when Constantine's body was put into the sarcophagus by his son and successor, Constantius, after the Church of the Holy Apostles had been completed, and a special space for imperial burials had been established. I think it is permissible to say that the sarcophagus of St. Constantia is a replica of the sarcophagus of Constantine. Such was *his* sarcophagus. And here it is not irrelevant to remember the words of Buondelmonti, who remarked that Constantine's sarcophagus was *immensus*, because the sarcophagus of St. Constantia is regarded as the largest, or one of the largest, ever fashioned.

Archaeologists are not very positive concerning this identification. Strzygowski once considered it probable that our fragment originated from the sarcophagus of Constantine. Ebersolt very cautiously remarks that it would be hazardous to affirm that this fragment comes from the sarcophagus of Constantine, although its attribution to the founder of Constantinople has in itself nothing improbable (*invraisemblable*). Mendel follows him. Ebersolt himself later modified his previous statement, saying: "The fragment in porphyry from the Museum of Constantinople must originate from the sarcophagus of St. Helena, which was brought from Rome, during the reign of

[51] See Strzygowski, *Orient oder Rom*, p. 79.

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Constantine the Great, with the remains of the pious Empress, and into which Constantius deposited later the body of Constantine." [52]

In this statement Ebersolt mentions the sarcophagus of St. Helena, which as he surmises was brought from Rome to Constantinople (Fig. 18). It is a very well-known fact that the great porphyry sarcophagus known as the sarcophagus of St. Helena is now in the Vatican Museum. It is a massive piece of work and in its size resembles that of St. Constantia. The sarcophagus of St. Helena is entirely devoid of Christian symbols. The reliefs upon its sides represent mounted warriors with their captives, an inappropriate subject for a sarcophagus made for an empress, especially for such an empress as the pious mother of Constantine the Great. It has been conjectured that in this case the subject may be symbolical, representing the triumph of the warriors of the true faith over unbelievers. But this interpretation is rather farfetched. There is no doubt that this sarcophagus with war reliefs would much better suit a military leader, so that it has been surmised that it was the sarcophagus of Helena's husband, Constantius Chlorus, whose military activities, particularly in Britain, have been recorded. It has even been suggested that Constantius Chlorus may have been buried in this sarcophagus with Helena. But all this is vague and uncertain.

If our chronology is correct, Helena, Constantine's mother, died in 329 on her return from Palestine. At that time Constantinople was not yet inaugurated, so that she was buried in Rome, supposedly in a very sumptuously ornamented sarcophagus. In 330 the new capital was officially consecrated, and Constantine, his court, and his administrative officers after this year gradually established themselves there. Among other buildings for which Constantine is said to have laid the foundation in his new capital he started to build the Church of the Holy Apostles, but did not have time enough to complete it. Constantine himself died in 337 in Nicomedia, and his son and successor Constantius brought his body to Constantinople. When the Church of the Holy Apostles, which was destined to become the imperial burial place, had been completed, Constantius ordered the body of his father transported from an unknown burial place where it had hitherto rested to the grounds of the new church. And there Constantius placed the remains of Constantine and Helena in the same sarcophagus. The tradition of this joint burial has lived through the Middle Ages and has been confirmed, as we have noted above, by almost all travelers who visited Constantinople. Such is the

[52] Strzygowski, *Orient oder Rom*, p. 80. Ebersolt, *Mission*, p. 14. Mendel, *Catalogue des sculptures grecques, romaines et byzantines des Musées Ottomans*, II (1914), 448. Ebersolt, *Sarcophages impériaux de Rome et de Constantinople*, *Byz. Zeitsch.*, XXX (1929–30), p. 586. See also Heisenberg, *Die Apostelkirche*, pp. 116–117. Cf. Delbrück, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

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most plausible but still rather tentative sequence of the consecutive burials of Helena and Constantine. If we admit this, we may see in our decorated fragment from the Ottoman Museum a bit of the original sarcophagus of Helena in which her body was transported by Constantine from Rome to Constantinople. We do not know where or in what burial grounds the bodies of Helena and Constantine rested before transference to the mausoleum of the Church of the Apostles.

In 1932 the French historian Piganiol acknowledged as the sarcophagus of Constantine our sarcophagus no. 4 decorated with the *crux ansata,* or Egyptian ankh, old symbol of divine energy, in the upper part of which the monogram of Christ is carved. "This union of pagan and Christian symbols," Piganiol writes, "fits no one emperor better than Constantine." [53] But I think that the *crux ansata* on our sarcophagus serves only as one proof more for the fact that the huge imperial porphyry sarcophagi were made in Egypt and were sent to Rome or Constantinople already finished. In this respect it would be pertinent to remember that, as has been already mentioned, in the porphyry quarries of Djebel Dukhan was discovered a Christian Greek inscription of the fourth century, in which the words, *καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία* and two *cruces ansatae* were harmoniously inscribed together.

In 1930 in the Turkish newspapers of Istanbul was printed the sensational news that the sarcophagus of Constantine the Great had been discovered. I received this amazing information myself from the German newspaper *Die Vossische Zeitung* and from the Russian newspaper, published in Paris, *The Latest News* (*Posledniya Novosti*), January 8, 1931. This discovery was supposedly made by a German scholar whose name was not revealed. According to the statement, the sarcophagus itself was discovered in the atrium of St. Eirene, now the Military Museum. Its identification as the sarcophagus of Constantine the Great was due to an old manuscript recently discovered, describing the sarcophagus of Constantine and mentioning that it bore a massive golden cross. The cross itself had of course disappeared; but a clear trace remained where it was attached. For a long time scholars had been unable to identify this sarcophagus. The sarcophagus in the Military Museum seemed not to have been considered in this connection. But now the *Vossische Zeitung* proclaimed, the German spirit of inquiry (*deutscher Forschergeist*) had solved this enigma (*Rätsel*). This statement, of course, is not to be taken seriously. We know that in St. Eirene, now the Military Museum, there is only one complete porphyry sarcophagus and this bears the *crux ansata.* The French historian, Piganiol, as we have seen be-

[53] A. Piganiol, *L'Empereur Constantin* (Paris, 1932), pp. 241–242. *Idem, L'Empire chrétien* (Paris, 1947), p. 64 and note 94.

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fore, is inclined to regard this as the sarcophagus of Constantine (in 1932).

Another interesting point is why the last emperor who was buried in a porphyry sarcophagus was Marcian, who died in 457. This fact cannot be explained by the Persian and Arab conquests of Egypt in the first half of the seventh century. More than one hundred and fifty years lie between these two events. Some slackening of exploitation of the porphyry quarries in the Egyptian desert may be noticed in the middle of the fourth century. Perhaps with some exaggeration Delbrück affirms that about that time men ceased to work there, and as a whole in the second half of the fourth century the Mons Porphyreticus (*der Porphyrberg*) or Djebel Dukhan was deserted. Since in the *Notitia dignitatum*, a document of the first half of the fifth century, a "cohors sexta saginarum in castris lapidariorum" (the sixth enclosure for animals in a camp of masons), under the command of the Dux Thebaidos, is mentioned, Delbrück supposes that a few masons dependent on the state who at that time still remained were militarized and settled there with drivers and beasts of burden, together with the soldiers.[54] Other scholars are inclined to believe that the end of porphyry extraction from the quarries came with the conquest of Egypt by the Arabs.[55]

We can be sure there was no complete break in supplying Rome or Constantinople with porphyry works; but there was a certain delay and decrease in number and size of the porphyry works which reached those cities. But we may say almost with certainty that during the earlier intensive period of exploitation of the porphyry quarries a great quantity of that precious stone was delivered to Rome not only in works already made but also in blocks, sometimes huge ones. In this respect the epoch of Justinian the Great gives us very valuable information. We know that this emperor used porphyry to adorn St. Sophia. The contemporary poet Paul Silentiarius, whose name has been mentioned above, in his *Description of St. Sophia* dedicated to Justinian mentions porphyry in two places. In the first he deals with columns of porphyry "which the well-greaved cliffs of Thebes, on the Nile, *once* produced."[56] In the other passage, which has been quoted above, he writes: "There is a wealth of porphyry too, powdered with bright stars, that has

[54] Delbrück, *Antike Porphyrwerke*, pp. 11–13; 29. See *Notitia dignitatum*, rec. E. Böcking (Bonn, 1839–1853), p. 77 (24), caput XXVIII; his notes 96–97, on pp. 340–341. *Notitia dignitatum*, ed. O. Seeck (Berlin, 1876), p. 66 (66), cap. XXXI. Referring to the word *saginarum* Seeck remarks: "fortasse scrib. *Sugambrorum* vel *sagittariorum*."

[55] See for example O. Schneider, *Beiträge zur Geographie und Kulturgeschichte* (Dresden, 1883), p. 75. Fiehn, Steinbruch, Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll, zweite Reihe, III (1929), col. 2271.

[56] Paulus Silentiarius, vv. 379–380: Ἔκφρασις τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Ἁγίας Σοφίας,

ἄχθος ἀερτάζοντες ὑπέρβιον, οὓς ποτε Θήβης
Νειλώιης ἐλόχευσαν εὐκνήμιδες ἐρίπναι.

Bonn ed., p. 20. *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentiarius*, ed. P. Friedländer (Leipzig –

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once laden the river boat on the broad Nile." [57] These two passages from Paul the Silentiary are very interesting, showing that porphyry works needed for building and adorning St. Sophia were delivered to Constantinople not directly from Egypt but from Rome, where they had been preserved for a long time.

We have analogical information in an anonymous treatise, *On the Building of St. Sophia*, which after mentioning that the best pieces of art were furnished to the capital from everywhere, writes that a certain widow, Marcia (Μαρκία) by name, sent by boat from Rome eight Roman columns which she had received as a gift or dowry.[58] We have noted above that the term "Roman column" meant porphyry column. So we see that a large amount of porphyry work had been stored in Rome from earlier times and used by Justinian for the adornment of St. Sophia. But evidently massive blocks of porphyry needed for imperial sarcophagi were lacking, because the sarcophagus of Justinian himself was made from another sort of marble.

Works in porphyry were known in Constantinople long after Justinian, for example a fountain in the Great Palace and another fountain in the so-called New Church which was built by Basil I Macedonian in the second half of the ninth century. From Byzantium porphyry reached even Ancient Russia, where in the Desyatinnaya Church in Kiev porphyry has been found in the floor mosaic.[59]

But all these facts fail to explain why the use of imperial sarcophagi in porphyry disappeared in Byzantine practice after the death of the emperor Marcian in 457. One general reason not connected specifically with the period of Marcian is that towards that time the quarries of Mons Porphyreticus or Djebel Dukhan were so neglected and exhausted that it was beyond their capacities to manufacture such colossal pieces of work as imperial sarcophagi.

But it seems to me that in addition to this another reason may be adduced. I refer to the Fourth Ecumenical Council, which was held in 451 at Chal-

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Berlin, 1912), p. 237. Lethaby and Swainson translate this passage as follows: "These columns were once brought from the cliffs of Thebes, which stand, like greaved warriors, by the banks of the Nile." *The Church of Sancta Sophia Constantinople* (London, New York, 1894), p. 37.

[57] Paulus Silentiarius, vv. 625–627: πολὺς δ' εὐπήχει Νείλωι φορτίδα πιλήσας ποταμίτιδα λᾶας ἀνίσχων πορφύρεος λεπτοῖσι πεπασμένος ἀστράσι λάμπει.
Bonn ed., p. 31; ed. P. Friedländer, p. 245. In English by Lethaby and Swainson, *op. cit.* p. 45.

[58] *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum*, rec. Theodore Preger, I (Leipzig, 1901), p. 76: καὶ τοὺς μὲν ὀκτὼ κίονας τοὺς Ῥωμαίους . . . μετὰ σχιδέας ἀπέστειλε χήρα γυνὴ ἀπὸ Ῥώμης, ὀνόματι Μαρκία· εἶχε δὲ αὐτοὺς εἰς προῖκα αὐτῆς. The word σχιδέα in the text is σχεδία (Preger, I, 129).

[59] See D. V. Aïnalov, *History of Ancient Russian Art. Izvestiya* of the Tauric Archaeological Commission, vol. 57 (Simferopol, 1920), p. 243 (in Russian).

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cedon, and whose decrees produced tremendous repercussions all over the Near East, especially in Syria and Egypt. This was not only a final blow to the ambitious pretensions of the Patriarchal See of Alexandria. It was not only a powerful stimulus for ultimate creation of the separate national Coptic Church in Egypt, with its own Egyptian (Coptic) language. It was also a mighty step for political independence of Egypt, for its political alienation and final secession from the Constantinopolitan government. General discontent and irritation in Egypt led, as we know, to the most important consequences: they facilitated in the seventh century the transfer of this rich, economically most vital and civilized country, first into the hands of the Persians, and later into the hands of the Arabs. And we must admit that it was beyond the strength of the central government to overcome this stormy separatist movement. It is very probable that because of the hostile attitude of Egypt towards the Constantinopolitan government, the country decided to put an end to manufacturing sumptuous sarcophagi for the hated emperors. The last porphyry sarcophagus for Marcian may have been fashioned and sent to Constantinople before the Council, because sarcophagi had sometimes been made for one or another emperor before his death. Even the two monophysitically minded emperors, Zeno (478–491) and Anastasius (491–518), who reigned shortly after Marcian's death and were from their religious inclinations acceptable to the Egyptian monophysites, were not honored with porphyry sarcophagi. Of course my tentative explanation of the disappearance of the imperial porphyry sarcophagi after 457 is an hypothesis which may or may not be accepted. In any event I can lay no claim to having it regarded as the unique and main cause of this striking phenomenon. There may be other possibilities.

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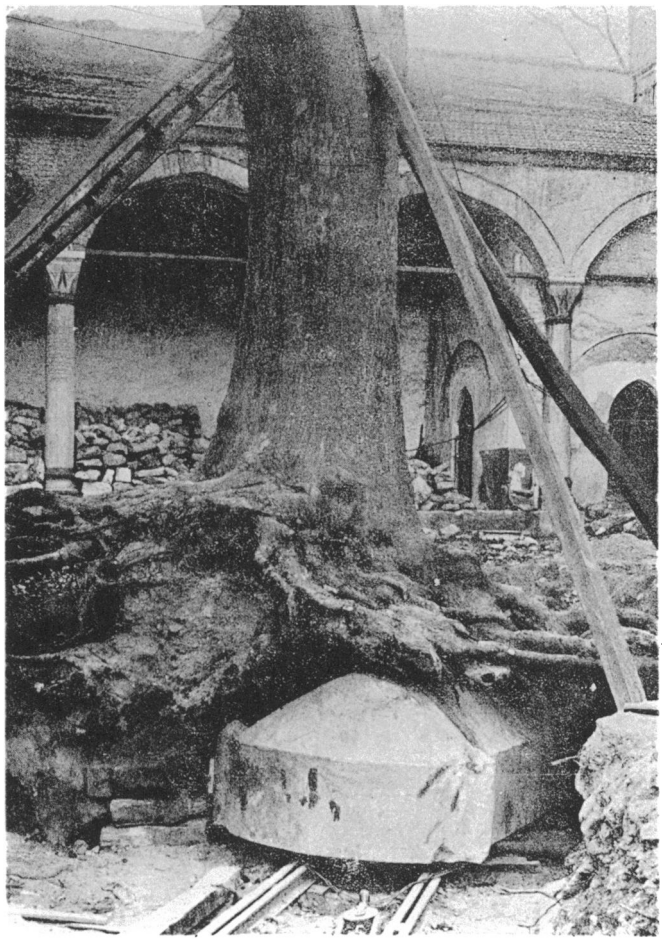

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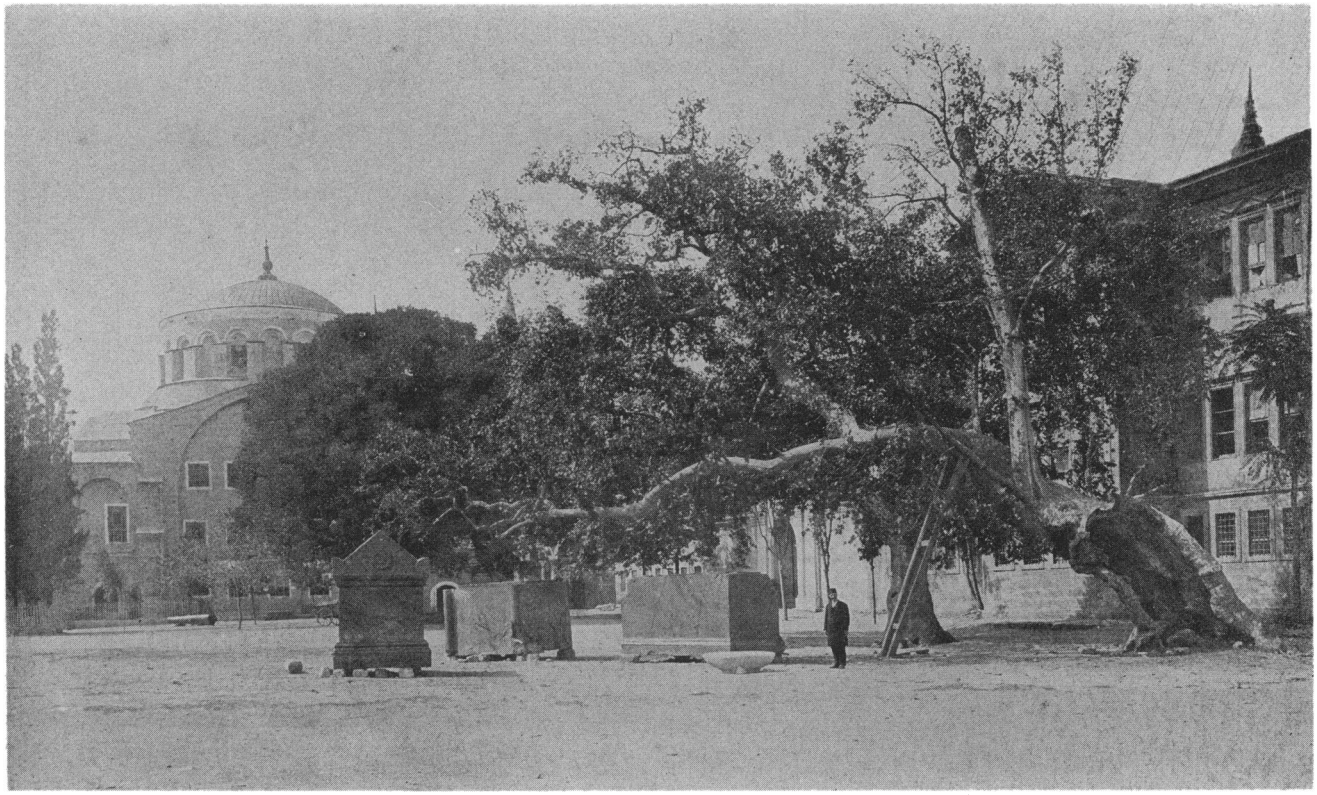

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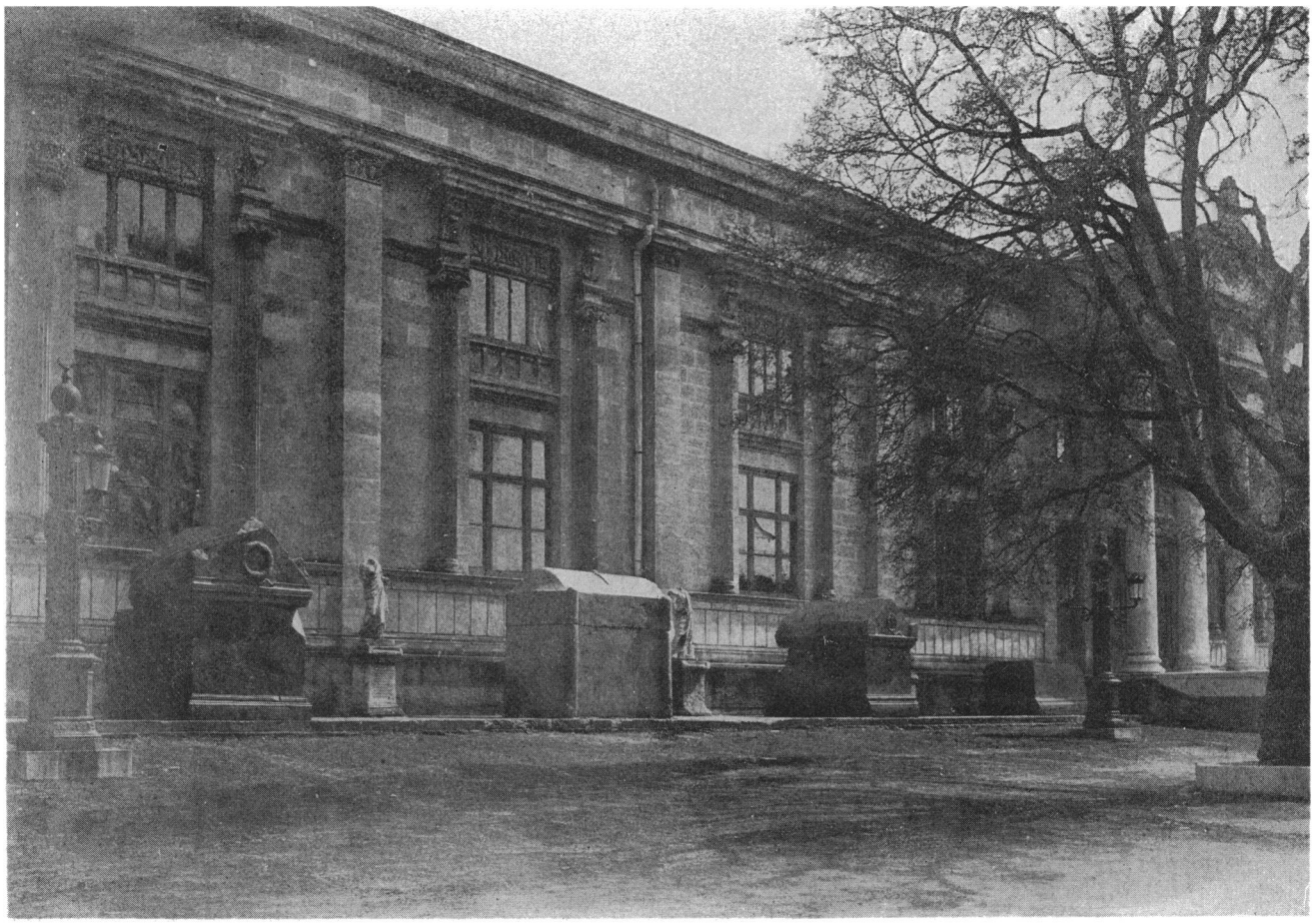

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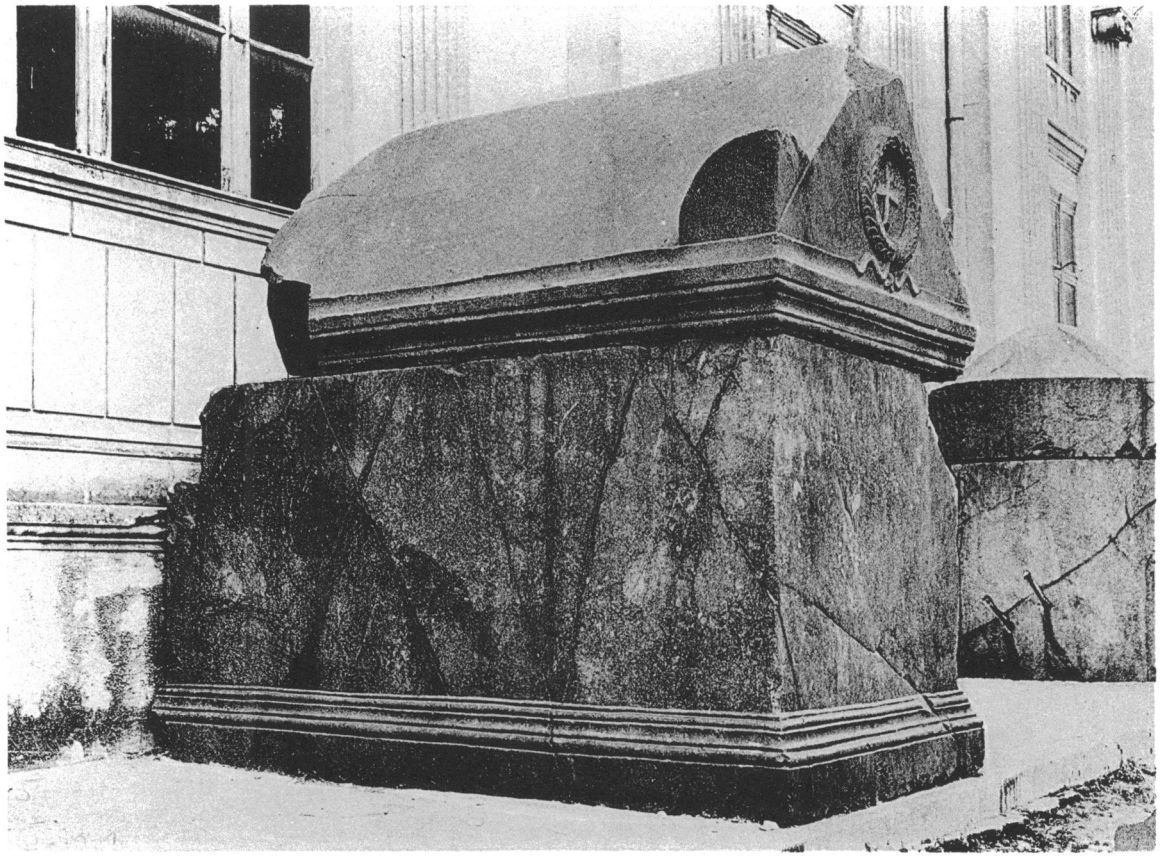

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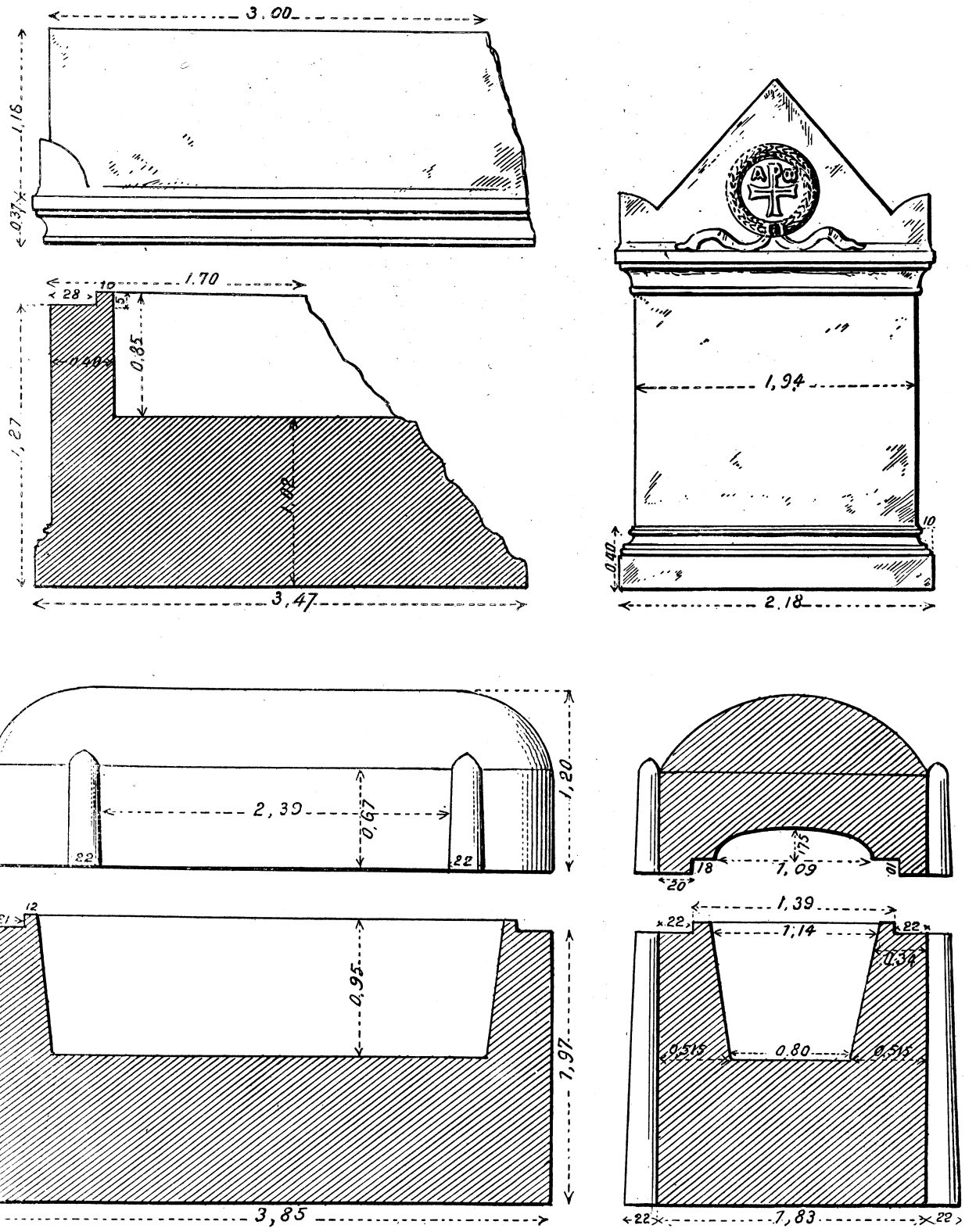

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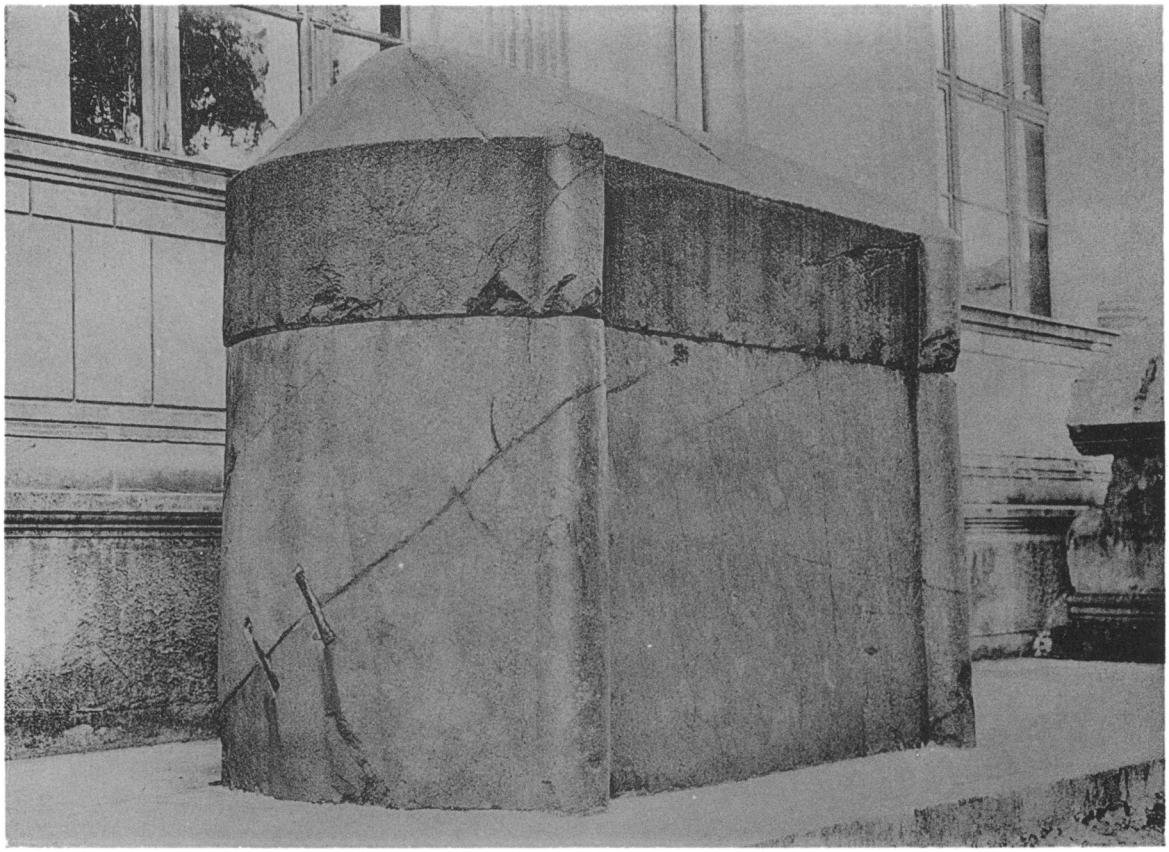

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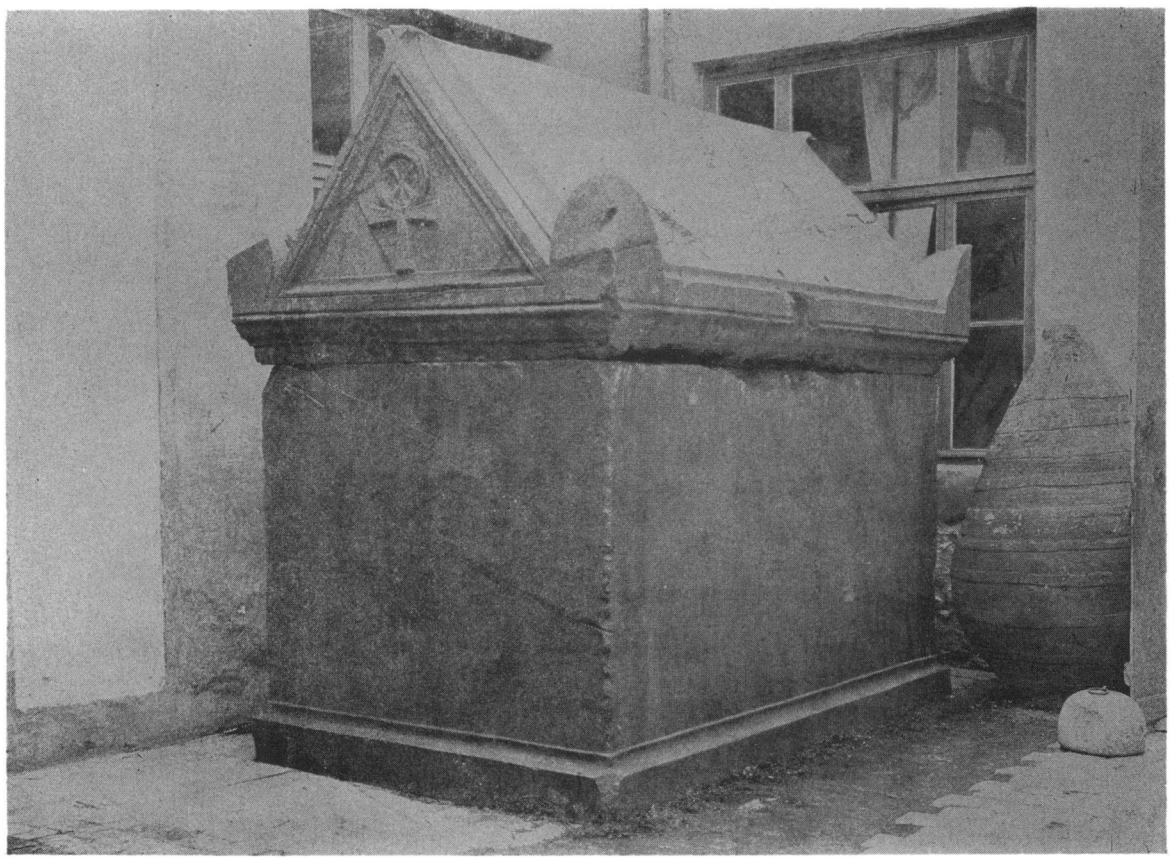

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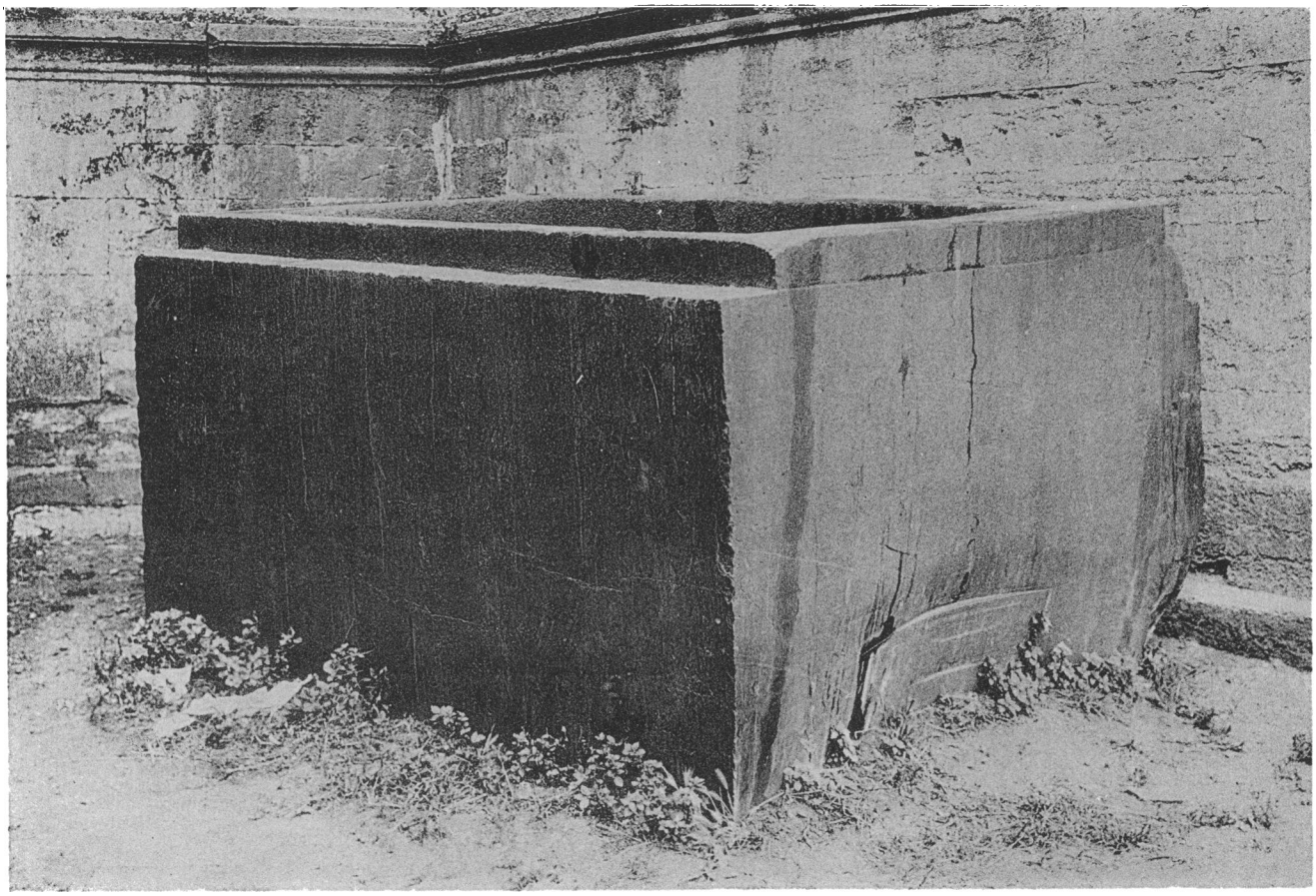

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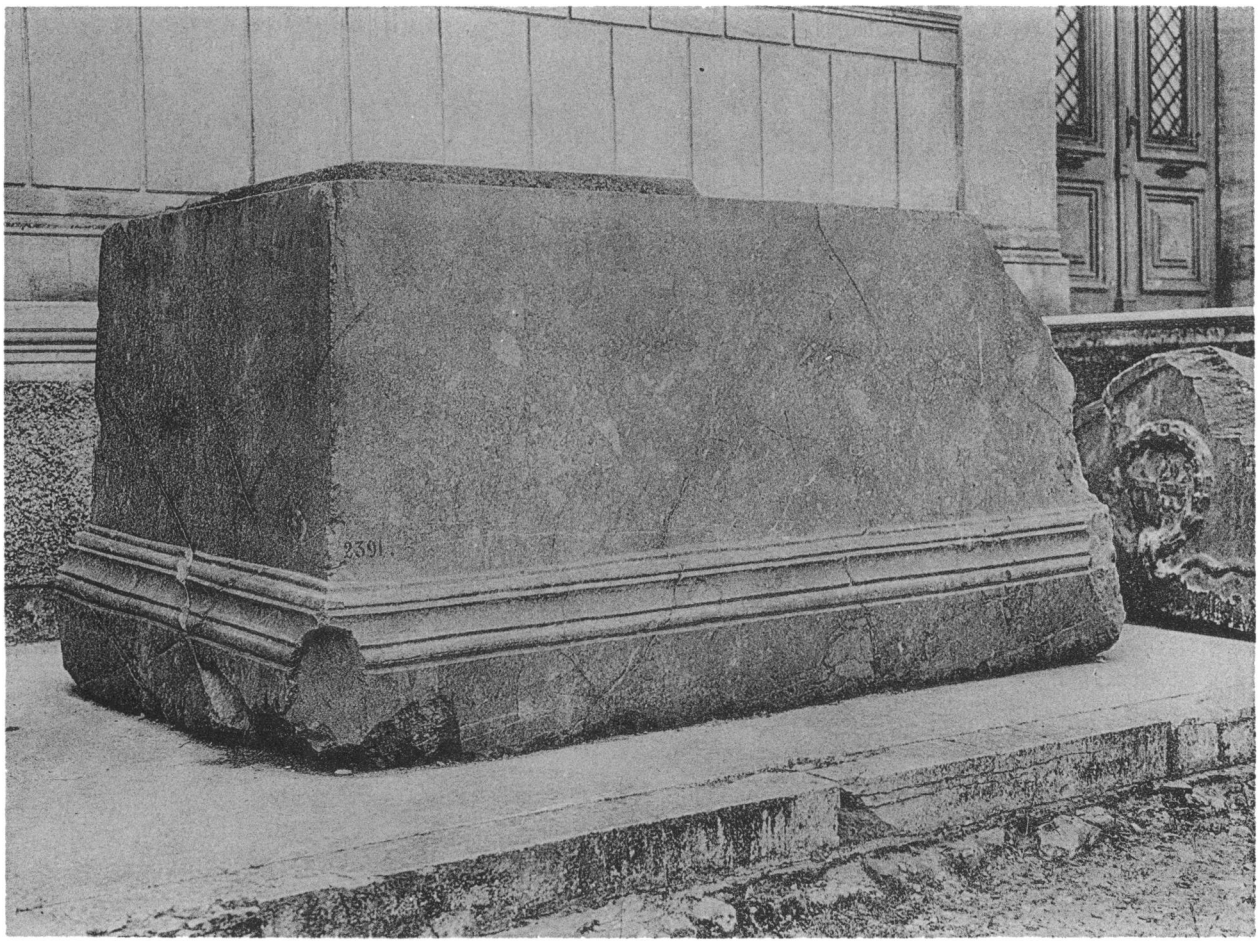

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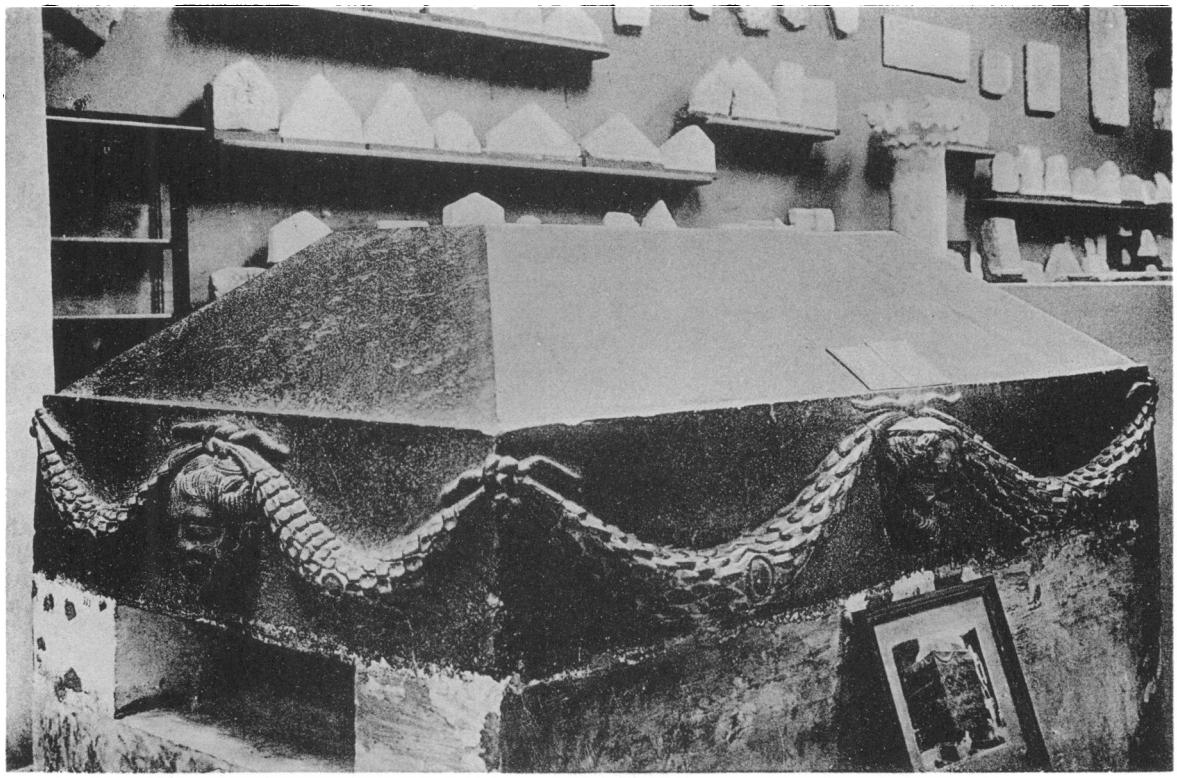

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